

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Republican leader is recognized.

TRADE PROMOTION AUTHORITY

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, everyone knows the top issue on the mind of most Americans right now is jobs. What I have said is that the one thing we could all do right now to help spur job creation is to pass the three free-trade agreements with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea. Republicans in Congress have been urging the President to pass these agreements for nearly 3 years. Yet they have languished on his desk for no good reason. It is time to send them up so we can act. At a moment when 14 million Americans are looking for work, it is indefensible for the White House to demand a vote on trade adjustment assistance as a condition for action.

Still, I and others have agreed to allow it so we can finally move ahead on these vital trade deals. It is my expectation, based on the understanding I have with the administration, that the President will stop dragging his feet soon and submit all three of them for a quick approval. At long last, U.S. businesses that want to expand here at home but which have been held back by the President's refusal to act will be able to compete on a level playing field in these markets, and it will create jobs in the process. These agreements, while helpful, are not enough.

In order to create the kind of jobs we need, we need more trade deals than these three. That is why I have been a strong advocate for granting this President the same trade promotion authority every other President has enjoyed since 1974. Also known as fast track, TPA creates expedited procedures for congressional consideration of trade agreements that the administration negotiates with our trading partners. TPA has long had bipartisan support and led to numerous trade agreements with 17 new countries during the Bush administration, including the 3 we hope to consider shortly.

Unfortunately, Democrats and their union allies allowed TPA to expire in 2007. This President has made no effort whatsoever to revive it. Without TPA, the United States will likely never agree to another deal. The unions will make sure of that. We have seen what happens next. After the North American Free Trade Agreement passed in 1993, TPA expired, and in the 8 years that followed the United States did nothing, while other countries moved ahead integrating themselves in the global economy. We cannot let that happen again. We cannot miss more opportunities to compete in foreign markets with U.S.-made products just because unions do not want to.

Consider this: According to the Business Roundtable, while our trade agen-

da has lapsed, the European Union is negotiating 16 trade agreements with 46 countries. Japan is negotiating 7 agreements with 38 countries, and even China is negotiating 11 agreements with 18 countries.

What about the United States? We have signed none since this administration began, and we are actively negotiating only one, a pact that will open opportunities to American businesses and workers across the Pacific Rim. I and many of my colleagues and many of our allies overseas want to know what is the President's plan to enact that one deal if he does not ask for, has not received, and does not even seem to want trade promotion authority; is he ready to watch all these opportunities vanish? We cannot allow these opportunities for American jobs to simply drift away.

We must reauthorize TPA, along with TAA. Historically, TPA and TAA have moved together; in 1974, when TPA was created; in 1988, when it was reauthorized; and again in 2002, when TAA was expanded to its current prestimulus levels. That is why I am offering an amendment that will grant this President trade promotion authority through 2013. It is the same term the Democrats are insisting we reauthorize trade adjustment assistance. My amendment builds into it the same accountability to Congress and the need to consult with Congress that previous TPAs have had. It is based on legislation offered by a bipartisan pair of trade leaders, Senator PORTMAN and Senator LIEBERMAN.

We are going to hear Democrats arguing we have not had enough time to carefully consider this expansion of trade promotion authority and work on the negotiating objectives we generally include in the bill. I would remind them I first called for TPA last May. Since that time, I have heard nothing from my Democratic colleagues or the White House about their interest in renewing this authority. There has been zero outreach. When I suggested I would be willing to support an extension of TAA if we could reauthorize TPA, there was nothing.

In my view, if the White House will not show leadership on this issue, if they are too worried about owning other free trade agreements or as being seen by some of their allies as promoting them too aggressively, it is my view we ought to help them get there. That is why I am offering this amendment to show the world some in Congress are ready to move forward and lower the barriers that keep American goods out of foreign countries and which American consumers all benefit from our integration into the world economy.

With 14 million Americans out of work and thousands of Americans looking for opportunities to sell American-made goods around the world, we cannot afford to wait, as we did on these three free-trade agreements, while the administration makes up its mind that

American jobs are more important than appeasing their union allies.

I yield the floor.

MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved. Under the previous order, the Senate will be in a period of morning business for 1 hour, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each, with the time equally divided and controlled between the two leaders or their designees, with the Republicans controlling the first half and the majority controlling the final half.

The Senator from Tennessee.

STEPPING DOWN FROM REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP

Mr. ALEXANDER. Madam President, I thank my friend of 40 years, the Republican leader, for being here for these remarks I am about to make. I thank my colleague, Senator CORKER, and several other of my Republican colleagues for, on very short notice, coming to the Senate floor for these brief remarks.

Next January, following the annual retreat of Republican Senators, I will step down from the Senate Republican leadership. My colleagues have elected me as Republican conference chairman three times, and I will have completed 4 years or the equivalent of two 2-year terms at that time. My reason for doing that is this, stepping down from the Republican leadership will liberate me to spend more time trying to work for results on issues I care the most about. That means stopping runaway regulations, runaway spending, but it also means confronting the timidity that allows health care spending to squeeze out support for roads, support for research, support for scholarships, and other government functions that make it easier and cheaper to create private sector jobs.

I wish to do more to make the Senate a more effective place to address serious issues. For 4 years in our caucus, my leadership job has been this: to help the leader succeed, to help individual Republicans succeed, to look for a consensus within our caucus, and to suggest a message. I have enjoyed that. However, there are different ways to offer leadership in the Senate, and I have concluded, after 9 years, this is now the best way for me to make a contribution.

It boils down to this: Serving in this body, as each one of us knows, is a rare privilege. I am trying to make the best use of that time while I am here. For the same reason, I plan to step down in January from the leadership. I will not be a candidate for leadership in the next Congress. However, I do intend to be more, not less, in the thick of resolving issues, and I do plan to run for reelection in the Senate in 2014.

These are serious times. Every American's job is on the line. The United